JOURNAL OF WOMEN AND CHILD HEALTH

Published by The House of Quantum NETWORKS

Publisher's Note
"The House of Quantum Networks" remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Plight of Women's Oral Health in Pakistan

Prof. Asaad Javaid Mirza
MCPS, MDS, FICD.
Baqai Medical University, Karachi, **Pakistan**.
asaadjmirza@gmail.com

OPEN ACCESS

ISSN: 3006-760X (Online)

Citation: **Mirza, P. A. J.** Plight of Women's Oral Health in Pakistan. JoWaCH [Internet]. 2025 June 12;2(2):3-4.
DOI:
https://doi.org/10.62807/jowach.v2i2.2025.3-4
Available at: Link
Editor: **Syed Khurram Azmat.**
Peer Review History: JOWACH recognizes the benefits of transparency in the peer review process; therefore, we keep all of the content of peer review and author responses in our repository. We do not have a hyperlink to publicly accessible peer-review history, but if needed, we can send the history to you.

Copyright: ©2025 Author/s. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution License**, and permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within the manuscript. We do not have a hyperlink to publicly accessible archived datasets, but if needed, we can send the raw data to you.
Funding: The author(s) received no specific funding for this work.
Competing interests: The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Abstract

Oral health, generally overlooked amidst pressing health concerns in Pakistan, significantly impacts women's well-being, affecting nutrition, self-esteem, and pregnancy outcomes. This write-up highlights the critical need to address the silent burden through enhanced education and awareness, particularly within rural and marginalized urban communities where traditional roles, misinformation, and limited access to care perpetuate a cycle of neglect. Educational disparity directly correlates with poor oral health outcomes, underscoring the transformative potential of integrating oral hygiene into school curricula and community outreach programs. Leveraging the existing infrastructure of PMDC-approved dental colleges for community-based educational initiatives can provide valuable hands-on experience for students while disseminating crucial knowledge on brushing techniques and dietary impacts.

Culturally sensitive messaging, delivered in local languages by trusted community health workers, is essential for effective knowledge dissemination. In addition, promoting the scientifically-backed benefits of the miswak, a religiously significant and readily available tool, offers a culturally resonant and cost-effective solution. Simultaneously, raising awareness about affordable modern options like diluted sodium hypochlorite mouth rinse can provide accessible and effective oral hygiene practices. Utilizing mass media and real-life testimonials can further dispel myths and encourage proactive dental care. While awareness is paramount, it must be coupled with increased access to affordable, quality dental services through clinic establishment and subsidized care. Ultimately, tackling this calamity necessitates a cultural shift driven by education, community engagement, and systemic reforms to ensure that oral health is no longer the forgotten thread in Pakistani women's systemic health.

Keywords: Educational disparity, Oral Health, Women's Well-being,

Layman Summary

E-waste, or discarded electronics, is a growing global health threat, especially for pregnant women and children. Toxic chemicals such as lead and mercury released during improper recycling harm brain development, respiratory health, and newborn outcomes. In richer countries, rules are strict to control e-waste, but many poor countries lack such protections. This editorial calls for urgent improvement in recycling programs and policies to protect vulnerable populations. The Journal of Women and Child Health argues for research that can help develop a safe, yet cost-effective means of managing electronic waste within developing countries.

In the intricate tapestry of health challenges confronted by women in Pakistan, one vital thread generally remains unnoticed is 'oral health'. Overshadowed by more immediate or culturally prioritized concerns, oral health quietly imposes a substantial burden on women, with implications that stretch far beyond toothaches and bleeding gums. Poor dental hygiene affects nutrition, self-esteem, and pregnancy outcomes; issues that lie at the very core of a woman's systemic health. At the heart of addressing this crisis lies the transformative power of education and awareness.

For a majority of women, particularly in rural and marginalized urban communities, dental health is relegated to the background, eclipsed by traditional roles, misinformation, and poor access to care. In cultures where family welfare is frequently prioritized over personal health, many women remain unaware of the importance of oral hygiene. The result is a cycle of neglect, exacerbated by limited understanding of preventive care, a lack of connection between oral and systemic health, and minimal exposure to treatment options.

Educational disparity plays a direct role. Women in underprivileged areas receive minimal formal education, a factor that correlates with poor oral health outcomes. A local survey found that individuals with lower educational attainment have less knowledge about oral hygiene, resulting in higher incidences of tooth decay and tooth loss [1]. The link is clear: education is the foundation of lasting change.

Embedding oral health education into school curricula can set the stage for lifelong healthy habits. Community outreach programs and workshops tailored specifically to women can further disseminate critical knowledge. Over 40 dental colleges operate across the country with approval from the PMDC, each featuring a Community Dentistry Department as an essential component. This task could effectively be assigned to these departments as an educational initiative. It will provide students valuable hands-on experience in community-based work.

These initiatives should focus on practical information; correct brushing and flossing techniques and dietary impacts on dental health. To be effective, messaging must be culturally sensitive and delivered in local languages. Community health workers, already trusted figures in many regions, can be instrumental in spreading this knowledge during routine health visits and neighborhood gatherings.

One particularly relevant and culturally resonant tool in promoting dental hygiene among Muslim women is the miswak. Derived from the root of the Arak tree (Salvadora Persica), the miswak has natural antibacterial properties that combat cavities, gum disease, and bad breath [2] [3]. Islam strongly encourages the use of miswak, especially before 5-time prayers, making its use a religious as well as hygienic practice [4]. However, many women are unaware of its scientific benefits beyond its religious implications. Empowering women with both religious and medical knowledge about the miswak could spark widespread adoption and ripple through families and communities, improving their oral hygiene practices. Given its low cost and cultural acceptance, promoting the miswak through mosque announcements, local campaigns, and female health workers is a practical and powerful approach. Its dual alignment with faith and health positions it as a sustainable solution to oral health issues in Muslim communities [5].

Yet, while traditional practices like miswak hold promise, modern science also offers valuable, accessible tools. One such innovation is the use of 0.25% sodium hypochlorite (NaOCl) as a mouth rinse. It is a simple bleach commonly used by women in the kitchens for dish washing. It is widely used by dentists in higher concentrations for root canal treatments; this diluted solution retains potent antibacterial effects while being safe for daily use [6][7]. Moreover, it is used to correct fluorosis, a dental esthetic problem frequently experienced by well water consumers, resulting in brown stains in moderate forms and pitting in more advanced stages [8]. Unlike commercial mouthwashes that mostly contain alcohol or harsh chemicals, 0.25% NaOCl is affordable, effective, and easy to prepare. Its inclusion in daily oral care routines can significantly reduce bacterial plaque, a major cause of gum disease and tooth decay [9].

Spreading awareness about such options is essential. Radio programs, television campaigns, and social media can all serve as powerful vehicles for change. Real-life testimonials from women who have improved their oral health can inspire others, dispel common myths, and reduce fear and stigma around dental visits. These stories are especially vital in communities where misinformation and past negative experiences deter women from seeking necessary care.

The benefits of increased awareness are far-reaching. Informed women can make better choices not just for themselves but for their families. They can advocate for their needs, prioritize dental care in household budgets, and ensure their children grow up with healthy oral habits. Importantly, knowledge of the link between oral hygiene and pregnancy outcomes enables women to seek timely dental care, supporting both maternal and infant health.

However, awareness alone is not enough. Without access to affordable, quality dental services, knowledge may fail to translate into action. A robust solution requires investment in the establishment of dental clinics in underserved areas, and collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations to subsidize care for low-income families.

In conclusion, tackling the oral and dental health crisis among women in Pakistan demands more than clinical intervention. It requires a cultural shift powered by education, community engagement, and systemic reforms. Empowering women with knowledge is the first step but it must be matched by meaningful access to care and culturally grounded solutions. Only then can we hope to weave a future where oral health is no longer the forgotten thread in women's well-being.

REFERENCES:

1. Taqi Mohammad, Asaad Javaid Mirza, Syed Mohammad Jahangir. Effects of educational attainment on dentition status in socioeconomically deprived population of Karachi. Pakistan Oral & Dental Journal 2014; 34(1):04-108

2. Hattab FN. Meswak: the natural toothbrush. J Clin Dent. 1997;8:125–129

3. Haque MM, Alsareii SA. A review of the therapeutic effects of using miswak (Salvadora Persica) on oral health. Saudi Med J. 2015;36(5):530-543. doi: 10.15537/smj.2015.5.10785.

4. Bos G. The miswāk, an aspect of dental care in Islam. Med Hist. 1993;37:68–79. doi: 10.1017/s0025727300057690.

5. Ahmad H, Ahamed N. Therapeutic properties of meswak chewing sticks: A review. Afr J Biotechnol. 2012;11:14850–14857

6. Mohammadi Z. Sodium hypochlorite in endodontics: an update review. Int Dent J. 2008;58(6):329-341.

7. M i s h r a R, Chandrashekar KT, Tripathi VD, Hazari A, Sabu BS, Sahu A. Comparative evaluation of efficacy of 0.2%sodium hypochlorite (Hi Wash) mouthwash with0.2% chlorhexidine mouthwash on plaque-induced gingivitis: A clinical trial. J Indian Soc Periodontol 2019;23:534-538.

8. Siddiqui AA, AlHobeira H, Mirza AJ, Alshammari AK, Bader Ayed Alshammari BA, Nawaf Hamoud Alsalwah NH. Dental Fluorosis in Saudi Arabia: A review of current literature. Annals Int Med and Dent Research 2017;3(3):44-49

9. Galván M, Gonzalez S, Cohen CL, Alonaizan FA, Chen CT, Rich SK, Slots J. Periodontal effects of 0.25% sodium hypochlorite twice-weekly oral rinse. A pilot study. J Periodontal Res.2014; 49(6):696-702. doi: 10.1111/jre.12151

The House of Quantum NETWORKS
JoWaCH

Unlock the power of impactful publishing with THoQN! Here's why researchers worldwide choose us:

- **Seamless Submission Process:** Submit your work effortlessly through our user-friendly platform.
- **Expert Peer Review:** Receive constructive feedback from leading experts to elevate your research.
- **Lightning-Fast Publication:** See your accepted work published swiftly to reach the global audience without delay.
- **Comprehensive Data Support:** Publish with confidence, including large datasets and complex analyses.

At THoQN, your research shapes the future. Join us today! Lear n more !